



WELCOME TO THE DEATH VALLEY DRIVER VIDEO REVIEW #153!

Your Cover is by the Teenage Cover Machine- ANTH!

We're slowly getting out of the Football Season Lethargy and back into the FUCK YEAH! WRESTLING lethargy so we are getting closer and closer to bi-weekly again. Ah bi-weekly, the eternal Death Valley Driver Video Review dream.... BUT! Enough of that. How bout

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THIS:

\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$ IWA KOTDM 2005- NIGHT TWO

[PHIL SCHNEIDER]

Ian Rotten/Mickie Knuckles/C.J. Otis/Delirious v. Iron Saints/Brandon Thomasellis/Josh Abercrombie/Jimmy Jacobs: The main feud of IWA-MS in the fall was Thomaselli's vs. Ian. The Iron Saints choked Ian's pregnant wife, crushed his skull and tried to do the same to his 7 year old son. Ian really knows how to book these heated multi-person matches, and the suckiness of Otis and the Thomaselli's didn't really hurt this match. The finish has Ian's son come off the top with a double stomp to beat Vito. Then Ian promises to cripple Vito on the next show, and this match did exactly what it was supposed to do. Make someone who just bought the show for the Death Match tourney (i.e. me), want to see this feud blow off.

J.C. Bailey v. Dysfunction: Most high end deathmatches are worked as extrapolations of regular wrestling formulas. Onita matches were Jerry Lawler/Hogan style big match face title defenses, with exploding barbed wire, Yamakawa v. Honma was 1997 All Japan with light tubes, Necro Butcher v. Toby Klien was Dick Murdoch v. Harley Race with VCR's being chucked at skulls. I really prefer Southern brawling to virtually every other style, so I obviously prefer the Necro style to those other types. This match uses 2002 ROH style juniors wrestling as its base, and adds barbed wire around the ropes and mat, and it isn't really a style of wrestling I care for at all, with that being said, the execution was fine, and the bumps were big and I imagine a bunch of people will really like this match.

Nate Webb v. Mitch Page: I was really happy to see Mitch Page back, as he was always one of my favorite old school IWAMS guys. This match wasn't spectacular, but was really solid, nicely paced, bumps and blood from both guys. Page especially takes a big bump to the floor, for such a fat boy. He has really great punches too, not Necro stiff, but really solid looking worked punches. For someone who doesn't really want to work these matches anymore, Nate Webb isn't afraid to absolutely die in them.

Deranged v. Mad Man Pondo: This is probably my favorite Pondo match ever, which really sounds like damning with faint praise, but it actually was really good. It is 2/3 falls lightbulb tube cabin match, with you needing to put your opponent through the cabins twice. All three of the big bumps were big bumps, and built to nicely. The backdrop off the bleachers through the tubes was especially nasty. Mitch Page was on commentary for this match, and was really awesome. Low key and really put over the big points of the match. Imagine an obese, blood soaked Bob Caudle. He really should have replaced Ross. Of course the main thing that will be remembered from this will be the draining of Deranged. Pondo scrapes his head against a cinder block and Deranged starts squirting blood out of his head like someone stepped on a ketchup packet. Right up there with the nastiest bloodlettings I have seen. The Maker's Mark was not settling well during this. Not at all.

Corporal Robinson vs. Toby Klein: This match was a lightbulb tube rope match, and it is a stip that really doesn't work well. The tubes don't really break when you are whipped into the ropes, and both guys basically rip them off the ropes and hit each other with them. At that point you might as well just have a regular lightbulb tube match. This was perfectly fine, but sort of

disappointing. These are arguably the #2 and #3 best guys in this tourney (I think Bull Pain is in that mix too) and it feels like this should be an epic, along the lines of the Klien v. Necro, and it really wasn't. It was clear that Klein was saving himself a little for the final, and thus he worked a simpler match, with less big bumps. Mostly this makes me want to see these two in a match outside of tourney format, a feud ending deathmatch would be really awesome.

Nick Gage vs. Bull Pain: This wasn't particularly good, as Gage is beyond awful, but I did enjoy it. Pain basically squashes him, doesn't sell, beats his ass and then really drops him awkwardly on his head, with a painkiller into glass. Pretty much exactly how I wanted to see this match worked, and I hope that is the last I have to see of Gage in IWAMS.

Necro Butcher vs. Tank: I really enjoyed this, although it wasn't the MOTYC that people have been talking it up as. What this is, is a really great example of why Necro Butcher is one of the best wrestlers in the U.S. This match is built around Tank being Vader to Necro's Cactus. Although unlike Cactus, Necro is established as a guy who will really lay a beating on you. For the match to work, Tank has to outstrike Necro, but the thing is, unlike Samoa Joe, Tank doesn't actually work stiff enough for the story to work. So when they do the chair sit down spot, Necro really leans in to all of Tank's punches, and then slightly pulls his punches. So it actually looks like Tank is the stiffer guy. Add that to the big bumps Necro takes on the floor, and the double stomp by Tank with lightbulb tubes on Necro's stomach, and the fact that Necro escapes with a desperation Asiatic spike, you have a match that really makes you want to see the rematch. Tank comes off looking super strong here, except Tank isn't really that good, he doesn't take very many bumps, and his offense isn't that great. It is a Necro smoke and mirrors performance. Compare that to most pimped Shawn Michaels smoke and mirror performances, when Shawn wrestles Hogan or Nash, it is all about how Shawn is bumping around for this big stiff. No one is impressed with the opponent, it is all about watching Shawn do his shtick. Here and in the previous match with Brandon Profit, you have Necro doing this one man performance, where it isn't about him but about the crowd chanting for his opponent.

Mitch Page vs. JC Bailey: This was a fans bring the weapons match, which is a stip I don't particularly care for. The other two semis were too, but this was the only one that was really worked that way. FBTW matches are often worked like comedy matches, here is a funny volleyball wrapped in barbed wire, lets do some spots with the volleyball. Look I am going to spike it into your nuts. The match was well executed, and both guys looked good, but it isn't the kind of match I really like to watch.

Deranged vs. Toby Klein: Deranged is a Toby Klein trainee, and really takes a huge beating here to put over his teacher. Klein opens up the cuts on Deranged's head and he starts bleeding even more then he did in the Pondo match. He takes some nasty bumps, including missing a moonsault and landing face first on the mat, which by this point is covered in tacks, broken glass and Hepatitis infected blood. Deranged really comes out of this tourney as the guy I want to see again.

Bull Pain vs. Necro Butcher: This was the match of the night. One of the big problems I have with Death Match wrestling and tourney's like this is that they are often worked 2002 ROH exhibition style. You have two guys do all these horrifically violent things to each other, and then hug and put each other over on the mike. You don't get hate or drama, it is often more of a masochistic game of one-upsmanship. Bull Pain ain't down with that shit, he cuts a promo about how much he hates Necro, based on some previous, possibly fictional, interaction, then comes out to kill him. I talked earlier about how most great Deathmatches are variations on styles, this isn't really even a Deathmatch per say, there is a bump into glass, but this a Bunkhouse match, Comes as You are, Texas Death, Streetfight. This is Tommy Rich v. Buzz Sawyer stuff, and it makes me want to see this happen a thousand times. Nothing over the top, or crazy, it isn't a match with alot of things to slow motion replay. It is just a good old fashioned bar fight, and there is no hugging.

Danny Havoc vs. Brandon Prophet vs. Hellaware Assassin: Man did I hate this match. All three of the guys in the finals had kind of been smartly building their matches, not overdoing the bumps, building up finishers and such for the final. Then you have these three yarders in your heatkiller, just burn through a dozen huge awkwardly executed bumps with no meaning and no selling. Really just drops trough and takes a dump on what your actual wrestlers had been trying to do. Really should leave this backyard wrestling garbage to CZW.

Necro Butcher vs. Toby Klein vs. JC Bailey: Previous KOTDM finals have been kind of truncated, as the guys in it are usually so busted up from previous matches that they can't do a ton. Here all three guys wrestled smart matches and came in to the final healthy, thus it was the best final I remember. I hate 3-ways and they really should have just made this Klein v. Necro, that is the match up everyone wants to see, and Bailey felt sort of superfluous here. Still it was pretty great, lots of lighttubes and enough glass that it really made the whole ring shimmer, like they were wrestling in a light Christmas snowstorm. Klein had been building up the DVD as his big move all show, and Necro had been building up the Asiatic Spike, so the finish was perfect. Necro goes for the Spike, and Klein counters it, by DVD him off the apron straight to the floor. In a tourney of big bumps, it was a bump big enough to end a show. I have no idea how Necro does what he does.

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\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$ Weekend with Smothers
[Raven Mack]

I just recently quit on the condescending asshole I was painting for, right before Christmas when he gave me 2 days notice we had 8 days off, then dropped a whopping 25 hour bonus minus the \$185 I was told I owed him, leaving a grand total of way less than what I would've got had I just been able to work. But I know how it is - motherfuckers have to go skiing and when you're work is in the hands of someone like that - apt to blow with the motivation the coke going up his nose pushes him - you'll lose some work.

But I've had these other cats on the backburner for a few months now, knowing shit had gone sour with my current gig, and just letting it play out like I knew it would. And the new job is still painting, but it's comforting. Instead of driving like an hour each way to work 6 or 7 hours a day, I'm driving 15 minutes. I don't go out to eat lunch on the new crew - packing some leftovers and an orange or two in a 6-pack cooler, getting a Dr. Pepper on the way to work for the cooler, maybe riding to the country store at lunch with the Mexican guy and buying me a 25 cent oatmeal creme pie - simple. Sitting on flipped over five-gallon buckets for half an hour underneath the cool winter sun, talking shit about whatever, going back to work, riding home from Schuyler to Scottsville along a two-lane road with barely a sign of commercial franchising going on - and that's only the Subway they opened in the dilapidated strip mall in Scottsville a month or two back where the place I used to buy goat feed was at. I don't drive by any Targets or Best Buys or Golden Corrals or any of that neonified glare along the edges of concrete jungles.

Come home and bring in some wood for the stove, go feed the goats, kick the dogs, walk around the yard and look at my odd collection of shit - old plywood and a used RV that somebody gave me, piles of this or that, a log playhouse I inherited from somewhere or another with disco beads for the door, compost bins and crooked sawhorses, a wellhouse with a piece of tin roofing nailed over the door that doesn't exist anymore... just your basic simple-assed shit. I'm turning 33 in about a month and struggle with bills every day every way, and I'm a painter, which means no insurance for me or my family and no retirement and no paid anythings other than getting paid to bring my ass into work and do it. And that's alright. They don't write songs people play at their buddy's funeral about going to Target. They write them about the good life, and I'm stuck in one when my head is clear enough for me to realize it.

Riding home today, I've been pumping some DJ Screw mixtapes (on actual tape) my wife got me for Christmas, mostly playing over and over the freestyle sessions at the end of the B-sides. I rode by the gas station to fill up the car (which I had been filling up 3 times a week at the old job, but this was my first gas-up since Sunday afternoon before the Redskins game - almost a full work-week on one tank), and some dudes pulled up in a Ford loaded down with some freshly split hickory and ash, and I go in and me and the old country lady hype each other up for the Skins game as she gets me a chicken thigh and I get a 12-pack out the cooler, and it was all so perfect. I'm a great worker - old school American style - packing a lunch and making peace with my neighbors and just being one little part of our little microcosm, oblivious to interstates and interest rates and political debates.

This got me to thinking about the whole concept of great workers when it comes to wrestling. The internet fan considers himself a student of the business/game/art form, but we really don't understand what we're studying all the time. And you see this in how popularity trends come and go quickly with the internet wrestling fans. There's no loyalty nor long-term commitment. The guy who makes the best custom comps in the motherfuckin' world today is selling all his shit for three bucks a DVD in 18 months because he's grown out of this compulsive obsession and is moving on to collecting Transformers or kung fu DVDs or something else that then becomes his life. This is not the psychology of the great worker (mental triggers go off in my own head as I used the two "I'm-so-full-of-shit" terms internet wrestling fans always use in one sentence - "psychology" and "worker"); as a great worker just does his job, for far too long, and most likely for far too little. And the thing about the wrestling fan (let me just make the point, I'm

not acting like I'm separate or above this; I am as guilty of it as anybody, and probably more so considering all the stupid unnecessary reviews of fucking wrestling tapes I've done) is all they are studying is the minute aspect of being a worker in the field of professional wrestling - being in the ring in front of a camera lens or a few sets of eyeballs. The fan doesn't see all the sitting around in the locker room, the camaraderies and petty rivalries and retarded conversations. The fan doesn't ride in rented cars if they're lucky or used ones pushing 200K on the odometer if they're dedicated along long boring roads with nothing but each other and the faint hopes of an aging rat showing up in the next town, her looking the worse for wear but probably worth the companionship to gladhand with 37 pasty wrestling nerds just to push their hips at her for a few minutes to convince themselves that it's all worthwhile. The fan doesn't have to think about divorces and old girlfriends or boyfriends who couldn't wrap their head around it. The fan is excited if he has a girlfriend who will actually go to a wrestling show with him. Our world, even though we think it's been opened up universally by the loss of kayfabe and the immensity of the world wide web, is still a tiny prejudiced glimpse into what it means to actually be a worker in the realm of professional wrestling.

Well, I bought this DVD last year at a show, from Tracy Smothers himself which was just one month's worth of Smothers matches. The DVD was a burn, and he signed it and it of course didn't even play on my DVD machine, which I don't know where I even got it from to be honest - I think my brother-in-law gave it to us and we left it in the box for like a year because we didn't have any DVDs. The DVD case says "If you make illegal copies of this DVD Tracy will kick your ass!"

Smothers is considered the great worker by today's internet fan, but I often wonder would he have been treated so kindly by that mass of self-important students had he never did the whole "riot" thing in IWA-Mid South, or never said the "mega murder mass homicide" bit. Would the fleeting trendy attention of the wrestling fans even noticed him had he just bee working in Tennessee, doing the exact same thing? Would there even be a market for Tracy Smothers DVDs, or would he be pushing rebel flag bandannas at the gimmick tables in north Alabama, which he'd sign for free when you bought one? (Actually, when I bought this DVD from Tracy, he opened it up to sign it, and I'm not one for autographs because they seem silly because if I have confidence in myself that I'm the shit, why would I put someone else on that pedestal so far that I'd be stoked to simply have them scribble their name on a piece of clutter? But when I declined the autograph, Tracy seemed confused, so when he asked again, I just told him my name was Mike Dikk.)

So let's ride through one weekend's worth of work with Tracy Smothers. The man's been wrestling for years and years and rode miles and miles, and the consensus is he's a great worker by internet fan standards, but let's just dig into the whole vibe of having to pack a lunch (or a case of beer) and riding roads to shitty little towns and dolling yourself up into that performance gear and going out there and doing it - on just one weekend out of thousands. May 5, 2005 - Red Jacket, West Virginia - Tracy Smothers vs. The Barbarian: Smothers comes out with Beau James as his second. Beau James is the perfect example of great worker by Great American Workingman mythological standards, but completely overlooked by the internet "student" of the wrestling business/game/art form. He unconsciously wears his hair long in the back and short in the front long after hipsters put a new definition for "mullet" in the dictionary a few pages after "milf". Beau James is stocky to the point of pudginess, he's back roads ugly

(probably not driving by too many Targets or Best Buys himself), but he's spent his whole adult life wrestling. In fact, I would say probably the only internet wrestling message board promo I've ever read that moved me was one Beau did when he came back to east Tennessee to take back over Southern States Wrestling from Tony Givens, after car crashes and promised moves and all sorts of real-life shit. Beau wrote this post on a board that maybe 50 people frequented, about all he's given up for wrestling, and what it means to him, and why he came back to east Tennessee and why Southern States was his. It was beautiful. It was wrestling - but in a very real and urgent sense as opposed to the self-conscious post-kayfabe way where you know what you think you know and you sort of play along with what's going on like watching a 9-year-old do a magic trick for you. Wrestling should not be 9-year-olds doing magic tricks; it should be the words and actions of a conman preacher putting the fear of the devil and the fire of the lord into your soul.

Smothers has whatever belt this promotion is recognizing, and Smothers is already bad-mouthing everyone in the bleachers of this high school gym. Right away - attention to details - you can see what's up. Smothers' voice is deeper and more alcoholic sounding than what you might hear where he playing a hip tweener role in some borderline yankee promotion in some town where people love bagels but are not so far removed from the rural south that confederate flags don't scare them. And this is indy wrestling, because when you talk about the tarp on the ring, it looks to literally be a big black tarp, like you'd cover your dilapidated RV with in the wintertime so it didn't leak too much through the roof. The Barbarian is older and his hair is not so freaky as it was in his Road Warriors derivative days, but he's still got some sort of pelt garment on for his entrance, making him look like a biker getting dressed up for the big bonfire party at the end of a Labor Day run. Smothers is in black trunks, because wearing the rebel flag gear would make him a babyface in places like Red Jacket.

There's a fat wigga kid in the front row straight ahead, with his baseball hat cocked ever slightly sideways, and some little bug-eyed dude half his size sits beside him, and the bug-eyed dude keeps mouthing off so Smothers will get in his face, then move back to talk shit to the bleachers, and when he does the bug-eyed dude keeps turning sideways to laugh and say "You see that shit!" to the fat wigga kid, and they remind me of the cartoon big dog and little dog with the little dog running circles around the big dog, pestering him about everything. And in the back corner of the bleachers, walking up I see what looks just like my youngest sister, bandanna and blue jeans, probably just finished smoking a bowl of homegrown with her best friend and their boyfriends, and after the wrestling they're all gonna go down to the river and the boys will drink Beam while the girls drink Boone's Farm. It's standard and stereotypical and might seem trifling and ignorant, but to throw yourself into that scene - watching the wrestling on the bleachers of where you dropped out of high school, then going down to get your mind altered by legal and illegal things while listening to the river swoosh over some rocks - it's perfectly simple shit they write songs about that people play at their buddy's funeral. All of them are chanting, "Tracy sucks! Tracy sucks!" and cute little girls with hair that's never been cut are coming right down to the rope barricade to yell it right to that big bastard in the ring. They ain't never scared.

Tracy actually carries The Barbarian and Beau James through the pre-match hype, for like ten minutes, leading James into covering Tracy's ears, and then having the popularity contest that cocky heels love to do since they assume everyone would love them. Tracy claps and no one claps, so he gets The Barbarian to do it and everyone claps. Tracy raises one fist and yells

"YEAH!" Everybody boos. The Barbarian does it and everyone cheers. Up to the first rope with both arms raised for Tracy, and louder boos. The Barbarian does the same and mad cheers from the bleachers. It is a three-and-a-half star pre-match stall/hype the crowd for simulated violence segment. Motherfuckers can watch every Johnny Saint match that ever existed and not understand the necessity of getting a bunch of beautiful derelicts in Red Jacket, West Virginia to care about why someone gets twisted into sailor's knot backwards then punched in the nose. Barbarian dominates early, doing one toss, then Smothers and James will complain about hair-pulling, but eventually it settles into Smothers cheating to gain advantage and grinding boots into Barbarian's face on the regular for a few minutes. Barbarian is not the great worker in this match, being a little stiff, and I don't mean stiff in the internet nerd way, but stiff in that his body refuses to move the way you would expect it to move to properly sell the theatrical combat going down. But The Barbarian has reknown as a Great American Worker in the mythological sense, so maybe he was hungover. I see that all the time as a housepainter. Barbarian as face is pretty useless as he's a scary muscleheaded monster, but Smothers is the better heel, so I guess he got the role by default. Smothers does the chain in the trunks gimmick in greater fashion than anybody ever, pulling them out and punching Barbarian, then twirling it around while dancing towards the crowd while the ref checks on Barbarian, tucking the chain in his trunks after the quick dance, all just as fast as it would've took him to discreetly obviously tuck it back into his pants. The addition of the gyrating dance is why Tracy Smothers is awesome, because he's taking some simple bread-and-butter in the lunchbox wrestling gimmick, but giving it some next level flair. Your mind does not come up with shit like that unless you smoke weed on back porches. I know that sounds like bullshit or some hokey "I'm Raven Mack and I'm crazy and I don't care" gimmick crap, but I'm telling you, it's the truth.

Smothers wins with the one punch-out, and Beau James is in the ring, and The Barbarian is suddenly civilized enough to verbally protest the goings on of the previous athletic exhibition. Ref raises Tracy's hand, and when Beau James raises his other arm, the chain falls to the ground, and the ref asks the crowd if it was used, and they go crazy, and The Barbarian is the new winner of this ridiculously long four-minute match. Nice ending as it solidified the crowd as a main participant in the match, Smothers carrying them to an integral part of the equation, and also makes the heels look like bumbling idiots, followed up with the standard guy who got wronged wants to punch his partner who fucked it all up, and the crowd gets all riled up because it's about time, but then they hug, and everybody is forced to uncomfortably confront their own homosexual tendencies. Cartoon little dog redneck lines up with the 8-year-olds to boo Beau James and Tracy Smothers, while cartoon big dog fat wigga dude leans back to tell his buddy who just stood up something to get at the concession stand.

If this were my main event of the night, I'd probably be pissed. Maybe there was a Gypsy Joe/Super Mario legends grudge match afterwards or something.

May 6, 2005 - Midlothian, Illinois - battle royal: IWA Mid South is far more known than whatever promotion ran Red Jacket, but the great thing is it works both ways, and I'd bet most of the kids sitting on the bleachers in Red Jacket could give a fuck about IWA Mid South. More kids in those bleachers as well. Winner of this battle royal gets a title shot is the word on the street. Battle royals are battle royals, which ain't much, and indy wrestling battle royals are like being not much of an ain't much. The one thing I notice right away is, as Billy Gunn is in this thing too,

Billy Gunn and Tracy Smothers each stand like half a foot taller than every other wrestler in the ring. Sometimes the same reason that Taz was never shit in the big leagues of professional wrestling is the same reason the all-universe Division III quarterback at the Mount Union Purple Raiders who stood five foot seven never got a sniff of the NFL. Maybe the WWE should follow professional football's lead and start a Canadian wrestling promotion where all the smaller guys who don't seem like star material by American standards can go to perform a much more passionate version of their chosen work.

This is why battle royals are stupid... some little dude is trying to throw Billy Gunn over the ropes in the middle of one side, so Smothers rolls up and rakes the little dude down the back, breaking up the attempt. Little dude does some reverse yoga stretches away, grabbing at his back with the wrong side of his hand, and then Smothers pushes Billy Gunn into the corner and tries to choke him backwards over the top rope. If I was seven and watched that, it would confuse me, because I wouldn't understand the motivations of what was going on. Wrestling, when done right, should be obvious enough to make sense to 7-year-olds, yet confusing enough to enthrall 37-year-olds. Danny Daniels is a full foot shorter than Tracy Smothers, which makes it hard for me to take him seriously, and some indy rock haircut dude just snuck back through the ropes all slick-like, looking like someone who could be named Josh Abercrombie or Tyler Black or one of those generic names that make no sense to me since I don't follow shit regularly because I'm forced to work for a living and that means spending my money on new pants for my children and not stupid DVD "deals" from Smart Mark Video. Watching small wrestlers throw vicious forearms is like sixty-nining with a 245 lb. chick - conceptually it seems perfect, but you have to trick your mind into accepting it as being worth half a shit. Danny Daniels and the Tyler Abercrombie Indy Rock dude are the only two left, and a match where either of them win is one where I lose. Maybe Mean Mitch Page will come out and clean house with a blunt held down behind his ear by a Nike sun visor, and then call out Corporal Robinson for a face-off...

Nope. Standard indy wrestling small dudes PUSHING EACH OTHER TO THEIR PHYSICAL LIMITATIONS HONORABLE COMBAT complete with budding men with low self-confidence in the crowd finding camaraderie by chanting in unison and a shitty ending.

May 6, 2005 - Midlothian, Illinois - Tracy Smothers vs. Chad Collyer vs. Billy Gunn: Smothers is the king of coming out to actual songs I listen to, with "If the South Woulda Won" by Bocephus tonight. I always loved how Hank changed Ronnie Van Zandt's name for that one line so it went, "the day young Skynyrd died, we'd show our Southern pride." Sadly, I don't know what day that actually is.

What the fuck is the deal with Billy Gunn billing himself as the Ass Man? And wearing a thong back in the WWE for that gimmick? I wonder how many men's tongues have been in that ass? I'd put the over under at 40, because when being a Great American Worker, even if not that great, and whether a wrestler or painter or janitor or lawyer or librarian or graduate student, when you say and do crazy shit, it's not out of nowhere - it's inside you. The Ass Man theme song sounds like Bon Scott's DNA was used to make a band with the Muppets and they hired Lou Pearlman to produce it.

On the mic, Tracy explains, in between bad-mouthing a loudmouth fan in the front row, how Collyer is a former NCAA All-American heavyweight champion, and how Billy Gunn was a quarterback, but Tracy sets up Chad's respect as well as teaming up against Billy Gunn, who is

the WWE character, and Tracy entertains the smart mark with his witty threats of minorly hilarious violence. He's done what he needs to done to get into a professional match between three guys who have no known beef with each other and no known TV show to establish such a beef.

Smothers and Collyer start off with technical shit, spiced by Smothers complaining about phantom hair-pullings and trunk-snatchings. Then they run a Collyer/Gunn segment, with similar technical highlights, spiced by hard knockout punches by Gunn. Collyer, about a foot shorter than both his opponents, then steps out the ring for the battle of the big two, but pretty much settles into a southern tag theme, with Smothers and Collyer having the scientifically savvy flesh of the match, while Gunn interferes against Collyer now and then, leaving Collyer in the position of little athletic wrestling dude getting double teamed by a pair of wily veterans. Ref bump, and Gunn switches roles suddenly by hitting his finisher on Collyer while Smothers is outside the ring, passed out from something simple. Two dudes run in and beat down Billy Gunn, who then gets pinned by Collyer when the ref wakes up. I hate the motherfuckin' everybody's-a-tweener-with-a-cult-of-personality booking of modern wrestling. I want to see somebody throw a fuckin' fireball into somebody else's kid's eyes, and then the kid comes out with a patch on his face for two months while the second guy works towards vengeance against the first guy. I guess a triple threat match is bound to be full of tweenerisms and shades of moral grey, but fuck...

May 7, 2005 - Streamwood, Illinois - Tracy Smothers vs. Danny Daniels: I've never cared too much for Danny Daniels, mostly because he's short yet with a thick physique from lifting weights and/or taking supplements, and that's usually the type of guy who uses the word "milf" in everyday conversation and gets a wicked tribal tattoo around his bicep. There are plenty of women who have children I'd love to get down with, but actually saying "milf", much less in actual reference to someone, seems so ignorant in a sheltered highly-accessorized Honda Civic at the strip mall adolescent upbringing sort of way. Which, of course since it seems ignorant to me, there'll be belly-exposing tank tops for sale at the state fair next year that say "MILF" that I'll see some redneck girl looking at longingly while her boyfriend buys a "GIT-R-DONE" confederate flag.

Danny Daniels ran his mouth for a few minutes, and then Tracy went to get the mic and the DVD froze. Now that's an old school worker - always puts on a good show and ripped me off for ten bucks at the gimmicks table, making his rent money and an 18-pack of Stroh's money as well. I can't fault a man for that at all, because that's the type of selfishness crossed with ingenuity that has made this country what it is today.

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SOUTHWEST ON USA- EPISODE ONE-1983
[DEAN RASMUSSEN]

Hangman Tim made me a copy of these Southwest things because I threatened to kill him if he didn't. We had watched a couple episodes over at one of those weird soirees we have over at Satan Pro's on random weekdays and it's all so fucking awesome. I got cable in Chesapeake in

1983 and I think I missed all this Southwest on USA by mere weeks- as I remember USA having WWF right before Hulk-A-Mania kicked in. I remember staying up all night the first day I got cable- watching the Adam and The Ants and Fun Boy Three videos. MTV used to show every video they could find. It was awesome. On USA, you also had NIGHTFLIGHT which had interviews with Devo and New Wave Theatre. Ah youth. The fertile and filthy guilt-drenched sex in secret places- with the youthful idiotic idea of love making it faux important and pseudo intense. The punk rock. The new wave. The Dire Straits records that I actually listened to the most. The Joe Jackson concert that my little brother and I went to at Chrysler Hall.... All these things. Will be lost in time. Like tears. In rain.

Ken Lucas/Ricky Morton vs (G)Ken Jackson(Johnson?)/ Ali Bey: I'm a hundred fucking years old and I've watched giant swaths of wrestling from about every possible place, time and angle and I don't ever remember seeing Ken Lucas. I've read about him and know about- as he is in the Ken Wayne realm of little CWA/Alabama guys who may possibly be a member of the Nightmares at some point. But anyway, here he is tagging with Ricky Morton and I definitely know who he is and what his importance to Professional Wrestling is. They interview the head of programming at USA in front of the HIGHlarious handpainted logo for SCW- and you could tell Joel Blanchard's granddaughter painted. "I don't care- IT'S GOING ON THE SHOW!" They interview the tag champions and Morton is like a panther BEING intense as Ken Lucas does the babyface thanking-of-the-fans schpiel. They cut to the ring and Ali Bey is the Turk and he's not wearing no shoes. Ken Jackson takes the dropkick like a early 80s enhancement guy and somehow has avoided the Southwestern Texas sun. Ali Bey cheats and Morton does the Ricky Morton section of the match for awhile but since this is a squash, Morton hits a backbreaker and they punch their way to victory. Ken Lucas' kneelift is 1/300000th of Mr Wrestling II's.

A bounty hunter is coming after Bruiser Bob Sweetan. Tully Blanchard is sending him. I love Professional Wrestling. All of these bountyhunters have to piledrive Sweetan because Sweetan put Blanchard out with a piledriver. Think of the genius of that story. Blanchard hates Sweetan's guts because he put Blanchard out with quasi-legal piledriver. Blanchard is filled with hate but is also filled with fear- he wants justice but he doesn't want to take another piledriver. THINK! Think of how this gets over Sweetan and how it gets over the piledriver.

Bob Sweetan vs Vladic Smirnof: They show the film from last week. Vladic is the bountyhunter. Vladic rules as he sells the Sweetan punch all the way out of the ring. \$5000 will get you put out of wrestling. Sweetan's punches are fucking SOLID GOLD. Sweetan's forearms are SOLID GOLD. Sweetan's piledriver is SOLID GOLD. Blanchard spits at him postmatch. Blanchard beats the living dogshit out of Sweetan after the match. Tully's punches are SOLID GOLD. [G]Ken Johnson[jackson] tries to make the save and he is the first of several to get beaten on by Tully. Ciclon Negro is slaughtered with a Blanchard piledriver. Tully busts Sweetan open by beating him over the head with a boot. Ken Lucas and Ricky Morton make the save and Tully looks like motherfucking Vader in 1993. THAT'S how you get a heel over. Sweetan in the postmatch interview is pissed off because Tully tried to "disfigure him for life!" Is it actually possible to disfigure Bruiser Bob Sweetan? Wouldn't that be more like "figuring him for life"? Tug Taylor is the new bountyhunter.

Tug Taylor vs Bob Sweetan: Hey! It's Fred Ottman! Tugboat didn't always weight seven million pounds. Here he is 320ish. Taylor throws a nasty elbow. Taylor does those chops across the back of the neck. ORIGINAL STRONG STYLE! MORE TUGBOAT! MUGA! MUGA! MUGA! Fuck, Taylor with the stiff forearms. I WAS WRONG ABOUT FRED OTTMAN. The psychology is that Ottman has to win with a piledriver and Sweetan powers out and goes on the offence- hitting the weird ass perfect dropkick. Taylor goes down to the piledriver and this was the best New Japan heavyweight match I've seen in weeks.

THE GRAPPLERS! vs Cowboy Scott Casey/Terry Daniels: WHITE BOY! Before he was the Dirty WHITE BOY! Terry Daniels takes an assbeating like a man. Jesus Christ, Dirty White Boy Grappler has the best fucking elbow drop on earth. The Grapplers were really fucking great- so vicious, so fast, plus the whole "we are better technical wrestlers than you" aspect. Daniels punches to TRANSITION~! and Casey does the awkward house a-fire before Len Denton kills him with a Vertical Suplex and they hit a SWEET Doomsday Device. Ricky Morton comes on the stick and says that they are fighting champions and in the ring 1-2-3 and what have you.

Hangman Bobby Jaeger vs El Santo Negro: Bobby Jaeger DADDY! I'm assuming that El Santo Negro is Ken Wayne- as Santo is all nifty and agile like Ken Wayne Tigermask was nifty and agile. Bobby Jaeger is all drugged and evil. Evil knees Agile in the stomach every day of the week. JESUS. Jaeger's Elbow Drop is fucking better than White Boy's. It's a fuckin refrigerator dropped off the roof onto your throat. Jaeger's punches in the corner are so completely dickish. El Santo Negro has a toprope crossbody press before getting fucking destroyed by Jaeger's Lariat. Jaeger fucking rules.

El Gran Appollo vs the Japanese Assassin: Oh man, there has never been a greater Southern manager than Don Carson. So evil, so Southern, so GAY. He was created by Tennessee Williams. "Oh mumma is mad cuz I won't give her no gran younguns and is upset because I spend all mah money on managin' these heah wrestlin' boys." El Gran Appollo was one of my favorite wrestlers when I was 8. He was all agile. The Japanese Assassin is Mr Pogo, I'm thinking. I'm guessing that Appollo and Pogo did this match 400 times in Puerto Rico and it is pretty much the PR blueprint- work out of the armbar, early babyface flurry, heel cheats and starts beating on the face, the face makes a few comebacks but gets cut off by the evil of heel. Hey, Puerto Rican wrestling is Southern wrestling. Whoda thought? El Gran Appollo escapes the Sleeperhold as they leave the air. Ah, the Texas wrestling brings back memories of my childhood. The world needs more Cowboy wrestlers and more El Gran Appollos.

EPISODE TWO

Terry Daniels vs Tully Blanchard: The USA ad for the Minnesota Northstars vs the Hartford Whalers makes you remember how old this is. This is Old School as you would imagine. Tully runs and hides from Daniels, getting - Elbows of greatness- Tully is awesome in the facelock- the knees to the stomach, the wrenching of the neck, the mastery and domination. Blanchard goes for the Elbow Drop finisher and it is a manly Elbow drop. Terry Daniels dropkicks to offence and Tully drives the rubes crazy by begging off. Tully cuts him off and KILLS him with another elbow drop. Tully- being evil and completely dick- PILEDIVES the already dead

Daniels and has the FACE OF SATAN as he covers Daniels. Tully Blanchard is fucking awesome. Postmatch they play a tape of Tully Blanchard with TIME HE BOUGHT HIMSELF- and he is pissed off at Bob Sweetan saying things to demean his character. Tully is fucking awesome as the son of privilege who just so happens to have all the physical skills to beat everybody's asses who is sheerly pissed off at Sweetan for putting him out of wrestling with a piledriver. Tully states that it's a personal thing, and he says the great part of his promos- "Everybody can watch or noone can watch. It can be in San Antonio or it can be in a back alley." Nobody can pull off that level of hate anymore. And the fact that Blanchard beats the living fuck out of Daniels- with the Elbow Drop and the Piledriver augments the whole cowardly heel schtick that Tully plays off of in this. Tully doesn't want to face Sweetan BUT Tully can kick everybody ass with authority. It's an ingenious way to build heat and build up both Sweetan and Blanchard working towards the showdown. Then Bob Sweetan comes out in the studio and they show footage of Hacksaw Duggan as a bountyhunter. Duggan is fun here beating all the blood out of Sweetan. There really is only punches shown. Mostly punches of Duggan punching Sweetan in the gaping bleedhole on his forehead. Sweetan hits the dropkick out of nowhere and bumps the ref and Tully fucks up the chair attack and Sweetan wins after beating the living dogshit out of Duggan and kills him with a piledriver!

The Grapplers vs Ken Lucas/ Ricky Morton: Lucas and Denton do a wad of scientific wrestling as a prelude to the old school faces-outwrestle-the-heels and you see the heels need to cheat building up. Lucas and Morton had a myriad of snapmares and headlocks and flying off the top into an armdrag until the Grapplers hit the floor to figure out how to cheat. DON CARSON COMES OUT and he is so evil and effeminate. He is wily and calculating and evil like a woman- the male Jezebel wrestling prototype that is reused over and over since this point. He distracts Morton enough for the Grapplers to start working on Ricky. Ricky fires back with a forearm but they maul him back into the corner. White Boy hits the beautiful kneedrop. God, Ricky Morton is awesome as he leans into a shoulderblock and you expect his head to actually roll into the announcers table. They go to a commercial and they skip past the hot tag and into Lucas with a Sleeper. Grappler Denton kicks out of the Lucas' kneelift. IT ALL BREAKS LOOSE! Carson gives Denton THE BLACK GLOVE and they crush Lucas skull with it. Lucas still kicks out?!? They Doomsday Device him but the ref calls for the DQ. While they are trying to reassemble Lucas, the Grappler go to the announcer and talk all kinds of shit- the best being apologizing to Don Carson for only injuring one of them. Carson gets on the mic and he is fucking AMAZINGLY great. "Ken Lucas may nevah walk agin!" Then his eyes go all wide and you are in love with the evil of pro wrestling.

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2005 MMA Awards
[BLOCKHEAD Dan Herman]

With my first calendar changing here on the DVDVR, I thought about doing an MMA year in review. Naimark always did the MMA Year That Was back when he had more free time and I'm not above stealing a concept and calling it a gimmick. I thought about doing his format: UFC, Pride, Other US, Other Japan, Anything else. Then I thought I'd be different and do the year in the various weight classes. As I started contemplating it out, I realized that this was just a fucking amazing year for MMA and I'd end up writing a novel, particularly with my penchant for tangents in my DVDVR pieces. In order to not end up regaling you with too many stories about Christmas in Brooklyn, I figured I'd do something I could plow through in less time.

For the last couple of years I've given out some alternative awards here on the DVDVRMB.

They started as an offshoot of a thread discussing Naimark's Year that Was, but they've become a tradition enjoyed by all. And "by all" I mean "by me" so you're going to have to suffer through it. In the end this is going to read like every sport columnists' attempt at a humorous alternative awards column, but I'm okay with that.

The first of my alternative awards is the Take the Money and Run Award. I first gave out this award in 2003. That was the year that Tank Abbott returned in a major announcement on PPV. He subsequently lost three listless matches, looked totally out of place and, ultimately, failed to get anyone over in losing or make a difference on PPV or at the box office. Oh yeah, he also collected a big fat paycheck every time out. This behaviour was such wrestling-carny perfection that it merited special attention and, more importantly, special mockery for Zuffa for thinking he'd do anything else. Last year I was at a loss for good candidates and ultimately gave it to Akebono, although that wasn't terribly fair. While Akebono didn't deliver in the ring, he delivered in the ratings and that's probably what K-1 was expecting anyway. Ultimately, unlike Tank, he was worth the money. With there not even being a candidate on that level I could conceivably give the award to a listless UFC heavyweight getting paid peanuts, but, really, what's the point? So this year the Take the Money and Run Award is discontinued until further notice. I couldn't be happier to do so.

The other special award is the one I've come to love: The Matt Hughes Award for Being Matt Hughes. The award is so named because it was inspired by Matt Hughes. Bet you didn't see that coming. The gist of it is that the award goes to someone who racks up a string of decisive wins against tough opponents and basically has a Fighter of the Year year, but is forgotten about in people's discussions of fighter of the year because of a lack of high profile and, well, that's what he's supposed to do. Hughes won the award in 2002 and 2003, but in 2004 he lost to BJ Penn on his way to a hat-trick and the award instead went to Yves Edwards (retroactively changed from BJ Penn, what was I thinking?).

In order to look for candidates, the starting place is obvious: Matt Hughes. Unfortunately, Matt Hughes only had two fights this year and, while he won them decisively, that's hardly the material needed for the Matt Hughes award. Not only that, Matt Hughes has seen his star rocket this year thanks to coming back from a groin shot against Frank Trigg on a highly watched PPV and going on to become the greatest heel on Spike TV since Eckley lied about Grisold to the Sheriff. Yes, Matt Hughes is just too high profile for the Matt Hughes award.

With Matt Hughes not being a good candidate, I figured I'd look towards other welterweights and, wouldn't you know it, there was this French Canadian guy who certainly had a Matt Hughes year. Four fights, three finishes, all of them dominating performances. Yes, Georges St. Pierre certainly had a Matt Hughes year. But the thing is, it wasn't missed by anyone. St. Pierre has just been too noticeable to be this year's Matt Hughes.

Now, Matt Hughes won the award while being a dominant champion who everyone expected to win and that rang a few bells in my head. In the UFC you've got Andrei Arlovski disintegrating three opponents with his fists, but after Tim Sylvia, the quality just dropped. He faced the best the UFC had to offer, but the Matt Hughes Award goes to someone who faces top overall opponents, even if he's above them all. In Pride, Fedor only raked in two victories and while one was over Cro Cop, the other was TK. Even if he beats Zuluzinho, he'd still fall short of the Matt Hughes mark, especially since Matt Hughes wouldn't even waste his time with Zuluzinho. Antonio Rodrigo Minotauro Nogueira certainly could fit the Matt Hughes mold, but he only fought once this year, against a guy in his debut match. No, no Matt Hughes in this pack.

Since I was starting to get desperate, I thought about guys not in the big two. Immediately Alexandre Franca Pequeno Nogueira sprang to mind, but, no, he lost to Hideo Tokoro. That took him right out of contention. DVDVR Presents Gilbert Melendez? Only two fights. Jeff Monson, I knew that he delivered a string of victories. Seven of them! Only one decision! I thought for sure I had found this year's Matt Hughes. Then I took a closer look and only one of them had a winning record. Monson's performance is certainly impressive, I don't want to take away from that, and he deserves his UFC shot more than any of the balloons they've been using. It still falls short of what it takes to be Matt Hughes.

I had to change my strategy again. I thought I had the perfect set-up. There have been four, count them FOUR, major tournaments this year. That's four potential candidates right there, only Mauricio Shogun is such an obvious candidate for Fighter of the Year that it's immediately back to six. Takanori Gomi and Kid Yamamoto are pretty much in the same boat. They're too undeniable as candidates to get lost in the shuffle, hence not Matt Hughes candidates. Dan Henderson has a loss on the books from the middleweight gran prix and a tournament win that's in debate. Sure his loss was above his true weight, but you can't excuse someone into being Matt Hughes. Ultimately he falls just short of the mark.

I was dismayed. Folks, it was looking like the world of MMA has become too stacked and exciting for there to be a Matt Hughes. I was thinking that I would have to give up when it occurred to me that I was doing this all wrong. One of the key elements of the Matt Hughes award is that the person has to go forgotten and I had been looking at the figures that people were talking about. Then another name sprang to mind and I typed Matt Lindland into the Full Contact Fighter database.

Okay, stop. No, really, stop. You're saying, "this is just Dan taking another opportunity to put over Matt Lindland." While I won't deny that his name came to my mind first because I rank him among my favorite fighters, the fact of the matter is I like the guys who take care of business

and get no recognition. That's part of the reason I've been a Matt Hughes fan for so long and part of why I made the Matt Hughes Award to begin with. So it shouldn't be a shock that another of my favorites gets the nod.

But it's beyond that. Matt Lindland displayed all of the Matt Hughes qualities. Lindland went undefeated facing four opponents. His first, Landon Showalter, isn't a win to crow about, true. He went on to face then 5-1 Travis Lutter who was considered a strong middleweight with a dangerous submissions game. Lindland submitted him. Lindland's next match was a unanimous decision over the incredibly game Joe Doerkson. Few would question Doerkson's status as a top-notch middleweight. He ended out the year cast out of the UFC with a win over Antonino Schembri. Nothing to crow about, true, but also someone many pundits were talking about breaking through to a new level. That didn't happen and Lindland got the TKO in the third.

But there's more. Matt Lindland also has the non-fight qualities of a Matt Hughes: underappreciated? And how. Doing what's expected by winning? No question.

Yes, Matt Lindland falls short in the sense that he didn't quite have a Fighter of the Year year, but he fought and beat quality opponents, as expected, and nobody cared about it. That's what the Matt Hughes Award is really about, recognizing someone who isn't being recognized. He falls short of when Matt Hughes won the awards, but I was going to shrug and give the award to Arlovski and Lindland just fought better opponents. I considered David Loiseau as well, and there's a case to be made, but Lindland edged it out. Yes, I'm a damn mark.

After I made the decision to award the prize to Matt Lindland, I reconsidered my earlier thought about Dan Henderson. Lindland has a couple of less-than-stellar wins this year. Henderson has one loss. If I can make a case for one, I can make a case for the other.

Winning the Pride 185 Gran Prix is an unquestionable accomplishment. If this year wasn't tournament-mania, Henderson would be a top candidate, even if some would put him on the list begrudgingly. Henderson doesn't miss the mark of Fighter of the Year for lack of accomplishments, he misses the mark because he's lost in the shuffle and that's exactly the situation the Matt Hughes Award was meant to remedy.

It may be cheating to call the thing a draw, but I'm fine with it. Your winner of the 2005 Matt Hughes Award for Being Matt Hughes is a Team Quest split: Matt Lindland and Dan Henderson. It may be little glory and minor recognition to get my stupid award, but they deserve it.

~!~

\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$ MID-ATLANTIC FILM STOCK, CONT'D
[AG]

PAUL JONES AND BLACKJACK MULLIGAN V BARON VON RASCHKE AND GREG
VALENTINE: The former team are babyfaces here, and this match is a clip job. What we get to

see is Mulligan getting beaten down by a hardworking, powerrasslin Raschke and Valentine, working more or less in a complementary role. Raschke is the worker of the team here, and with good reason. Mulligan takes a massive beating from the heels, staggers to his corner, and, well, Paul Jones just can't be reached for the tag. This goes on for a few minutes, rinse and repeat, with the crowd not really booing so much as disgusted by the perfidy of it. They knew Paul Jones was a runty me-first bastard. They knew Blackjack couldn't trust him. The heels eventually score the pin and then Jones comes in and it's three on one. This set up the Raschke/Jones team, IIRC, so 1979? [AG]

BLACKJACK MULLIGAN V BARON VON RASCHKE: I love to wax rhapsodic about the workrate in Crockett cards, but this match put the lie to that assumption. This is the battle of the claws -- like, twenty minutes of one guy holding the claw on the other. The execution is great, and it's one of those things that would've been transcendent in 1979, but now, on a shitty little VCR tape, it doesn't hold up. Still, Blackjack goes over with some flash pin and all of the young marks with their memo pads and their ballpoint pens herd around the face corner, looking for a piece of their hero, even though he just beat back the old Nazi and probably was in no condition to gladhand. I can't defend this match as great ringwork, but interesting archival footage all the same. [AG]

MASKED SUPERSTAR V ANDRE THE GIANT: Yeah, so I love Bill Eadie. He bumps all over the place for Andre, who does all of the comedy shtick people like Meltzer found grating. If you want to see a fat drunk Frenchman rub his ass into the front of Bill Eadie's singlet, this match is for you. Personally, I think Maeda had a point. [AG]

~!~

!!
A teasing glance has pushed me out,
Now is that, is that
SINGLES 45s And UNDER
The tougher tougher tougher it gets
The more my lips frequent
Now that is love.
!!

STEVE REGAL V PEGASUS BENOIT [JDS]: September 1995 [WHEN THIS MATCH HERE TAKES PLACE] was such an optimistic time for pro wrestling. Folks thought workers like Malenko, Guerrero, Benoit, Regal, Rey, Juvy, and of course Tommy Dreamer were the future of the sport, capable of making American wrestling a workrate haven. Well, as with all predictions, it was partially true. Many of those names drew money and all that, but the business unfortunately cannibalized these workers rather than playing to their strengths.

I say this because after watching this match, it is hard for me to imagine anyone in America having a match that could do what these two did here. For starters, there was no rope-running, though the ropes were used for highspots in the back end of the match. The first fourteen

minutes or so were mostly on the mat, with a lot of strikes, the psychology rooted around dueling short-arm scissors. Though Regal got most of the strikes in, he also ended up flashing color. Pasty Englishman.

This was the kind of thing we used to see at NWA arenas in the 80s, really. Reminiscent of Les Thornton matches on Mid-Atlantic undercards, with just a lot of hard work on the mat and no playing to the crowd. It's unfortunate we can't see this kind of thing in WWE, but, as Regal says in his book, he's a better house show than TV wrestler, allegedly.

We don't get much physical comedy here from the heavyweight Regal, as the match focuses on his offense to a great degree. Benoit may still have been a junior here, so a nice way to think of this match might be as a sort of 1990s BILLY ROBINSON V MIKE JACKSON. No, that never actually happened, but you get my point.

Highspots! My favorites here were the Benoit Frankensteiner and the Regal double-underhook superplex. These were, as you'd expect with workers who understand how to work a fucking wrestling match, set up with loads of foreshadowing, wear-down holds, and the like.

If wrestling were more like this domestically, would it draw? I doubt it. Americans are fucking morons. That's why our best seller lists suck, our pop charts suck, our movies are propagandistic tripe for consumerist ephemera, our women are silicone-ridden anorexics, and we're all working shite jobs to maintain our benefits so we can get psychotropic medication. If wrestling really does die because of the current era's excesses and shortcomings, then it might be interesting to look back at a match like this, and see what could've been.

I mean, really, imagine a Regal/Benoit Best of 7 series. Naw, couldn't happen. It would be too real. Better to just dust off Booker T for one last shot at refracted glory. And when that doesn't pan out, put Chelsea Girl Orton in Booker T's place. No one would ever notice, right?

I wonder, typing this, if I am just giving into nostalgia, and then I reject that idea. It's not "nostalgia" to want a payoff from what you're watching. It's not "nostalgia" to want things to seem like they aren't actively insulting your intelligence. It's just common sense. We don't have much of that in rasslin right now, but we have more corpses than ever before, a new one every month it seems. We have people with the backs of 80 year olds because they were forced to roid up and do 8 highspots a minute, because otherwise how can you keep those fat bastards in the seats? Well, enough of this. -- J. DANFORTH SHOCKET, ESQUIRE.

\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$ Dick Murdoch vs. Joe Young - strap match - June '83-[RAVEN MACK]: I don't know who's daughter Joe Young fucked to be put into the jobbing status of a strap match on World Championship Wrestling tv show, but he's there. A big fella too, taller than Murdoch and with a pudgy stockiness that could've be acceptable easily enough at that time, yet close enough to become more toned for the McMahonization of the pro wrestling in the coming years. I would imagine that Joe Young was either a glorified jobber, or the only man willing to get into a squash strap match with Captain Redneck, as Young has a small rebel flag on the ass end of

his trunks and looks like he'd make an excellent drinking partner. Twas such a wonderful role that of the glorified jobber - to be too good to just be another piece of shit, but still forced to pay dues as a piece of shit. Today, there is no standard TV product for every promotion to have someone pay their dues in such a manner, so you do so through the system of indys, and may pay your dues eternally - asked to do dangerous fucked-up shit for years and years and never be able to afford renting a decent sedan unless you go in quartersies with some other workers. But Joe Young is appropriate enough, and immediately attempts to leave the ring in disgusted fear, only to be yanked back in, to show the audience at home just what the strap match is designed to do, while the commentator explains the rules of dragging a motherfucker to all four corners to win a specially stipulated match.

Young gets hung up in the ropes, and Murdoch sort of indiscriminantly yanks on him trying to get him back in, and even with the ref's help, Young's big bumbling ass is still hung up, so Murdoch drags him back in and pummels the shit out of him in ways that don't look enjoyable. The odd thing is, as Murdoch goes for the first circle of the turnbuckles, Young fights his way out of it, which enrages Murdoch to show the second use of the strap - for whipping a disagreeable motherfucker relentlessly and leave red marks on a pale white back. Big brainbuster looking more like a suplex, wrap the strap around fatboy's neck a couple times, and drag him along behind you for all four turnbuckles and it's over. Lays out the specifics of the strap match encounter for fat asses sitting at home and makes Joe Young look like a big tough young kid who ran into the double tough fists of Dick Murdoch. In five short minutes, you've established the ferocity of the now, and laid a little layer of groundwork for the future, which may never be capitalized on, and probably wasn't as I don't think I've ever heard of Joe Young outside of this match. Isn't he one of the dudes in Antiseen?

\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$ BROCK LESNAR V SHINSUKE NAKEMURA: Little actual heat in the house at the start. The wrestlers are stoic to the point of seeming uninvolved, like people in fashion adverts who linger languid and stylish until they lose their looks and so on. That's fine if you're trying to sell jeans, like, but rasslin is my bag. Not much rasslin to start off though -- Lesnar, who could've been a legend, does some Nikolai Volkoff kick-punch-bullshit on Nakemura. It's all fine, I guess, but it's Brock Lesnar, and he's reduced to being some halfassed Goldberg clone. All of this for mildewed trim from a worn out furpiece? Sad. Lesnar doesn't sell, but Nikita Koloff didn't sell either, and remember all of his great matches? Lesnar throws some suplexes, just like Taz, and boy did those matches stand the test of time, huh? What I'm saying, I guess, is that Lesnar is one boring motherfucker to watch at this point. He moves like the love child of Byron Leftwich and Redd Foxx. He is musclebound and stiff. It's as if Scott Steiner never died watching this crap. Lesnar fronts intensity, but has these prissy little mannerisms that undercut it. Kind of like a bull with pink nailpolish. Nakemulkey is one hell of a seller -- of course, those paper crowds don't come together for nothing, do they? Is wrestling just fucked? I mean, this match is Batistariffic, but I can't imagine this turning around the fortunes of a dying business. Maybe they can move all the wrestling to the third world and eastern europe, where marks can always be found. The marks in the west and Japan, after all, are in thrall to the cult of self. The work here, though empty of any even ephemeral meaning, is competent, and if you give a shit about Lesnar or New Japan you may well watch this and be able to pretend like you saw something worth a damn even though you know you didn't. [J. DANFORTH SHOCKET]

\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$ Tully Blanchard vs. Manny Fernandez - sometime Southwest- [RAVEN MACK]:
This is off that Wrestling Gold thing that came out whenever it did, with the BONUS commentary tracks where Dave Meltzer and Jim Cornette trade insideryness with each other, AND WE GET TO LISTEN! I know this is the internet, so most of you probably love that, considering yourselves smart and worldwidewebby, but I can usually only stomach a few minutes of that type of shit before it pisses me off, very much for the same reason I don't like Sportscenter anchors anymore - it's eggheads putting themselves over at the expense of bad asses, or at least telling stories they heard about the bad asses that the bad asses may not necessarily tell if asked. Now don't get it twisted - if the truth be told, I'm probably about 23% egghead, 14% bad ass, and 63% slothful molecular structure that only finds direction so as to provide for the offspring I've created attempting to indulge the bad ass 14% of my Self.

I chose this match because these two wrestler embody a lot of what I love about professional wrestling, and why I love it so much to this day. Manny Fernandez, with his stocky frame and blue collar mustache and salt-of-the-earth promos looking like a guy who'd be sitting two stools down the bar from you who'd smile when Johnny Paycheck's "I'm Gonna Hire A Wino" song came on the jukebox, is a hero to the fat asses and sad sacks sitting in steel chairs ringside because he IS them. A rough-around-the-edges, pure-hearted, veteran of hard knocks. And Tully Blanchard oozes swagger and cockiness, to the point he could've been a car salesman or high school gym teacher, and he'd be just as hated by everybody he dealt with as he was as a persona on the wrestling television programs. It seems only right he ended up born-again, as when the crinkles of time start to dent your face, and the bright lights of your youth full of fast money and flirting women willing to do anything at all go dark and all that's left is a few semi-attractive regulars you kept in decent touch with, all you can do to justify this complete change in your lifestyle is to sacrifice yourself to some silly notion of God. It doesn't happen right away, but you get that moment of lucidity when you make the connection that the 10 you laid in the Charlotte Marriott in '87 is the same person as the 3 in the Best Western twin bed somewhere near High Point trying to figure out how to make her calling card work so that she can make sure her son feeds the dogs since she's not coming home tonight. So the pleasures of the Devil have abandoned you, so it's time for God, plain and simple.

We are very much a Godless culture, and I don't mean in any sort of pulpit type of way, but just in believing in things. Wrestling is a predetermined art form. Man was created from evolutionary occurrences. Everything can be watched, analyzed, and explained eventually.

I was talking to the Mexican dude I work with this week who walked across a desert with a single gallon of water, since no one else talks to him at work, and was mentioning luchadors to him. He had mentioned Eddy Guerrero dying, and it made me stoked the way he spoke of him - as a Mexican hero who went to America to be a star wrestler. But then later we talked of La Parka, and the dude said Parka was dead. I asked him, "Like Eddy Guerrero?" and when he said yeah, I could see in his eyes that he believed in his heart that La Parka was not a living man, yet he wrestled. I felt bad because I'm sure my eyes showed I didn't believe him in that La Parka was actually a dead man and found it all quaint. But thinking La Parka is dead I'm sure gives him so much more power as a wrestler over the fans. Is it ignorant? Sure. Is that bliss? Probably not, but just as ignorance is not bliss, we're never gonna genetically modify a utopia. The perfect spot is probably somewhere in the grey, not the black or white.

I can tell you this though, I believe in my heart that were I to sit down next to Manny Fernandez, he'd enjoy a beer. And I believe in my heart that Tully Blanchard could give two shits about talking to me. When I was in 7th grade, I actually did get to meet Tully Blanchard, and he didn't give two shits to talk to me.

The punches in this match are far more realistic than what you see in WWE world today, probably stemming from the fact a fistfight was more socially acceptable back during that time. Straight knuckle-first strikes to the target, as opposed to big wind-up flops to the top of the head with the side of your fist. No wonder no one believes. Like handing out sacrament, saying "Here's some wine, let's all pretend it's Jesus' blood."

Fernandez controls shit completely, like any good ole boy would in a fight against some primadonna prettyboy, but they get ringside and Gino Hernandez comes out to help Tully lose by DQ but open a gusher on Fernandez's face. Face in terrible peril is ended by Chavo Guerrero clearing house with a cowboy boot, and man I love the multi-ethnic flavor of old Southwest Championship Wrestling. I'd like to believe something like that could happen again, but you'd have malcontent American kids getting all ironic by ringing rudo bells all the goddamned time, until Mistico comes out, and then they'd all cream themselves.

\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$ Yoshiko Tamura/ Azumi Hyuga vs Nishio Mika/ Haruka Matsuo- NEO - Super Show- 8/18/05-[DEAN RASMUSSEN]: God, I have been out of the Joshi loop for a while now. The death of GAEA pretty much sealed it for me- as well as this whole universal transition to dvd and uploads/downloads, causing my network of tape-trading to completely disappear. Luckily, my little brother has a strange wad of disposable income to blow on a hundred wrestling dvds a week (I think it's the lack of a drinking problem that frees up money for him that I wouldn't have) to keep me abreast- but he's not big into Joshi, being more of NOAH/NJ/AJ man. Plus Joshi got smaller, not us fans. Hangman Tim was usually good for some Joshi but I think his love died with GAEA. Ah, GAEA... So Lenny- young, liberal, sexy- posted a batch of NEO on the board and I shall take a gander. And try not to weep bitter tears about the end of the perfect Memphis Joshi promotion. I figured I watch this one because I can pick out Hyuga and Tamura. Mika has a trailer trash feel that I love in my Joshi wrestler. She has really long legs and sinks in the Sleeper like she could fry you up some Jimmy Dean sausage in another setting. Hyuga gives off the vibe of a broken woman who saw the tail end of the Joshi boom and is now playing out the string- a distaff John Nord rolling on fumes and professionalism. Matsuo is tiny and blows some stuff early. She does the deep armdrag that is nice but I'm keeping an eye on Mika and her tall offense. She is Sally Tall and Plain and she wants to beat your ass because of it. Tamura looks like Hector Garza during his WCW tenure- bored, listless, spinning her wheels and no salvation in sight. Hyuga has a flash of former brilliance with a slick reversal into a DDT and it kicks into gear as Matsuo tags out and Mika brings more of an assbeat than the Matsuo schoolgirl-jack-off feel to the proceedings. Hyuga is a pro though as she leans into Mika's big boot and dropkick and Long Legged Missile Dropkick for two. Then they kinda go to a premature nearfalls section at 5 minutes in when I would have wanted Hyuga to beat some heat onto Mika but we'll see. They kinda stalemate until Tamura tags in and then Tamura beats the life out of Mika a bit but not enough to actually accomplish much psychologically in the match. Then they kinda hit roll ups for five minutes. Lacked lesbianic subtext and any true hatred. Yeah, I miss GAEA. Tamura does bring a minute of nastiness beating the living dogshit out of

\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$ BROCK LESNAR V YUJI NAGATA: Initially more back and forth than the previous competitive squash, with early intense upright wrestling of the sort we love so much. You know, the collar and elbow tieups that aren't released because both guys are just soooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo intense and sooooooooooooooooooooo legit that they can't let go. Their fighting spirits all swoll up so huge they like to spring a leak. Yeah, that's how it starts. And it stays upright for a while, both guys working with little light, making waistlocks actually mean something, much less showbiz than previous, at least initially. Lesnar takes advantage with a back suplex, then everybody back to their feet, working the lameassed late 80s upright wrestling stuff with little in the way of compelling, meaningful, big-match psychology. I mean, I'm waiting for Rita Chatterton to stick a Jose Luis Riverasickle up my wazoo watching this crapola. Lesnar busts out a spinebuster that owes more to CW than to Arn, and then they take it outside for some primo Ed Gantner quality brawling. I mean, it's like so unexpected, those shots outside the ring. Nagata throws a couple of potatoes, but still, the story is so stale it doesn't matter. Lesnar throws some fruity kicks, and can't make the crowd give a shit, from what I can see. I've seen tollbooth collectors get more heat. On the positive side, the work here is again stiff throughout, except those kicks. But to me it looks like Lesnar has lost the ability to tell a compelling story in the ring. His psychology is pedestrian and beneath his skill set. I guess what I'm saying is that this didn't move me. [J. DANFORTH SHOCKET]

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8 FISTS IN THE FACE OF WRESTLING, MOTHERFUCKER.

THE DEATH VALLEY PLAYAZ